ART EXHIBITION CATALOGUES REPUBLISHED ON MICROFICHE

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HEPWORTH

EXHIBITION

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1959

HEPWORTH

GALERIE CHALETTE 1100 MADISON AVE. NEW YORK

Barbara Hepworth at Trewyn Studio St. Ives, Cornwall

A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

By Sir Herbert Read

My dear Barbara:

When I heard that Dr. Lejwa wanted me to write an introduction to this catalogue, my first instinct was to refuse—just because I have written so many such introductions, and the convention becomes a little stale. Especially in your case, I felt I could not once again offer my inadequate words as a buffer between the uninitiated visitor to the exhibition and the works themselves, in all their plastic innocence. I began a letter to you to make my excuses, and in writing the letter I found I had something to say, and that I was saying it in an unconventional way. And so the letter became this introduction.

It is more than a quarter of a century since you found me a neighbouring studio in Hampstead, where a group that included Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson and Paul Nash, worked in close proximity until dispersed by the outbreak of war. The beginning of that experience is recorded in UNIT ONE, the book we published together in 1934. When I turn the pages of this book

nowadays I am overcome with nostalgia: how young we were (though we had all reached our thirties) and how full of hope and energy. We had the will to make a revolution, and now we can look back on this quarter of a century and say that we have made it—made it in spite of the interruptions of war, in spite of political disillusionment, in spite of the heartbreaking indifference of the British public. (We won our victories in Venice and São Paulo, in New York and Tokyo, and even in the fortress of Paris—only when our artists came home with their trophies did their reluctant countrymen begin to acknowledge their merit.) Looking back to those statements we made in 1934 I can see that we came through because we had something more than energy and ambition: we had a vision—a universal or abstract vision of beauty, as you called it, to which we devoted our lives without any thought of immediate profit or fame. Do you remember what you said in that statement of 1934?—it bears repetition:

"The predisposition to carve is not enough, there must be a positive living and moving towards an ideal. The understanding of form and colour in the abstract is an essential of carving or painting; but it is not simply the desire to avoid naturalism in the carving that leads to an abstract work. I feel that the conception itself, the quality of thought that is embodied, must be abstract—an impersonal vision individualised in the particular medium."

What we have called "abstraction" in art has always been more than a technical conception. All art, as indeed all life, is a combination of spirit and matter, and though we may hesitate to define spirit, we know that it exists, and that it is a subtle essence that flows only into vessels of grace. It is

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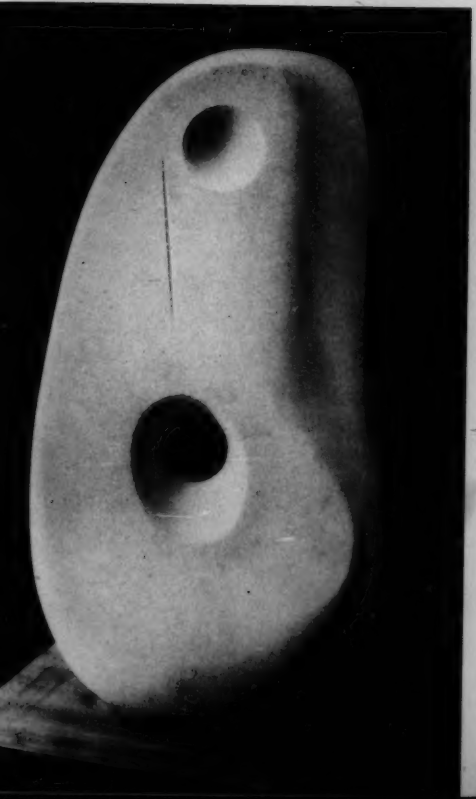

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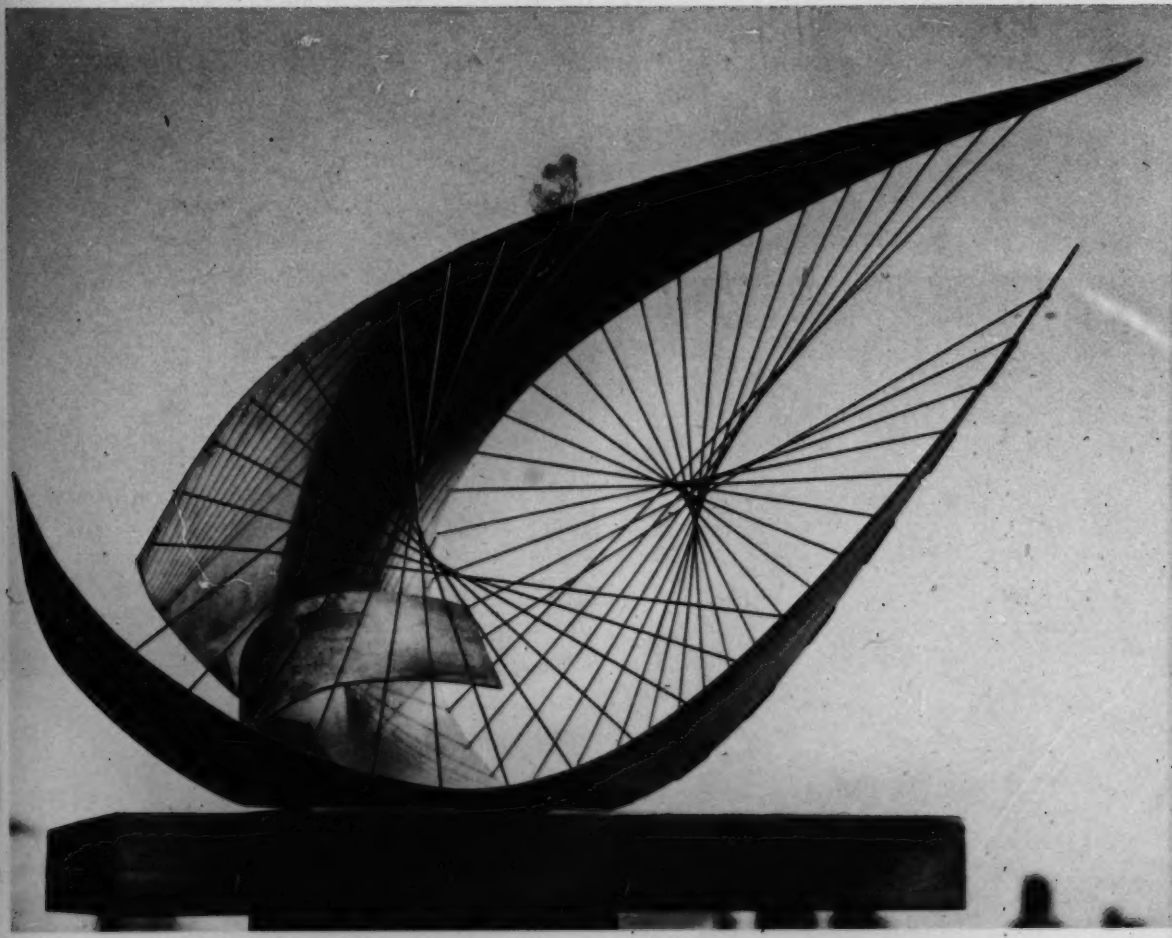


present in nature, it is present in the human figure; but it is not present in our imitations of these things unless the matter has been re-created. We cannot design beauty, we cannot manufacture beauty; we can only give it birth, by a process that is analogous to the biological process of conception, prolonged gestation, and delivery in travail. To watch the gradual emergence of the figure from the block of stone is to watch the spirit informing the matter, fusing the intractable substance to organic shape and vital rhythm. How can such a process be confined to imitation? Must it not rather seek a perfection of form that is a harmony of spirit?

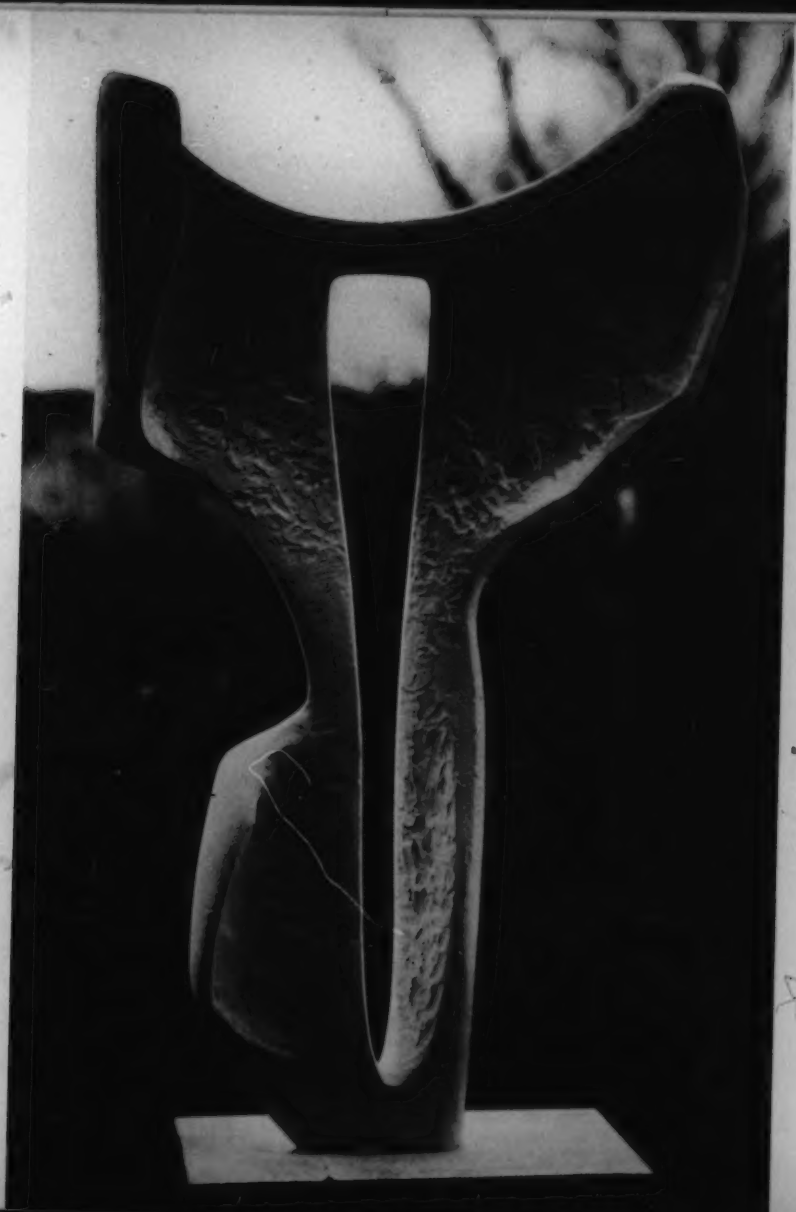
That, in my observation, has been your constant search. The only difference, as compared with the past, has been your different conception of harmony. In the past harmony was conceived as a relationship we derived from nature—the Golden Section was reduced to a mathematical equation (a modulor, as we now call it) and painters, sculptors and architects were taught to use this equation much as a tailor uses his measurements to make a suit. But harmony cannot be created by measurement or by the exact imitation of harmonious objects in nature: it can only be communicated by the flow of spirit into matter. I am not trying to obscure the process in mystical language: it is a practical process, as all creative artists know. The woodworker in Chuang-Tzu gives the simple explanation. He had been carving wood into a stand for hanging bells or musical instruments, and when he had finished the work was so perfect that onlookers thought there must be a supernatural explanation. But the wood-carver explained it in this way: "I am a simple craftsman and have no special powers. But when I am

ready to make such a stand, I try not to waste my spirit. I fast in order to reduce my mind to a state of serenity. After three days in this condition I no longer expect any reward or official recognition for my work. After five days I am indifferent to praise of any kind for my work. After seven days I become unconscious of my body and my four limbs. Then, with no thought of the Court present in my mind, my skill becomes concentrated. I go to some mountain forest and select a suitable tree which I know will contain the form that harmonises with my inner nature. I can now see the bell-stand in the tree and then, but not till then, I set to work. I bring my own natural capacity into relation with the nature of the wood. The heaven in Nature unites with the heaven in Man."

I doubt if you had ever read this parable of Chuang-Tzu's in 1934, but your words then were almost the same as the words of the Chinese woodcarver: "It is the relationship and the mystery that makes such loveliness and I want to project my feeling about it into sculpture—not words, not paint nor sound; because it cannot be a complete thought unless it could have been done in no other way, in no other material or any different size."

"It must be stone shape and no other shape."

That is the process (subtle but not supernatural) that I have been watching all these years; that I have watched with increasing wonder and admiration. Your achievement is now secure, and though no artist will ever admit that his work is complete (for creation, in an artist's life, is a vital function), nevertheless, as your exhibition will show, there is a sense of fulfilment in your work, you have found the Hesperides. I am quoting too much, but there



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is a poem of Lawrence's that comes to my mind at this moment, and since it too uses the image of the carver, I will end this letter with its appropriate words:

Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!
A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.
If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me!
If only I am sensitive, subtle, oh, delicate,. a winged gift!
If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am borrowed
By the fine, fine wind that takes its course through the chaos of the world
Like a fine, an exquisite chisel, a wedge-blade inserted;
If only I am keen and hard like the sheer tip of a wedge
Driven by invisible blows,
The rock will split, we shall come at the wonder, we shall find the Hesperides.

Your exquisite chisel, dear Barbara, has come at this wonder, and I for my part would blur no whisper, spoil no expression of its pure revelation.

London, July 17, 1959

Herbert

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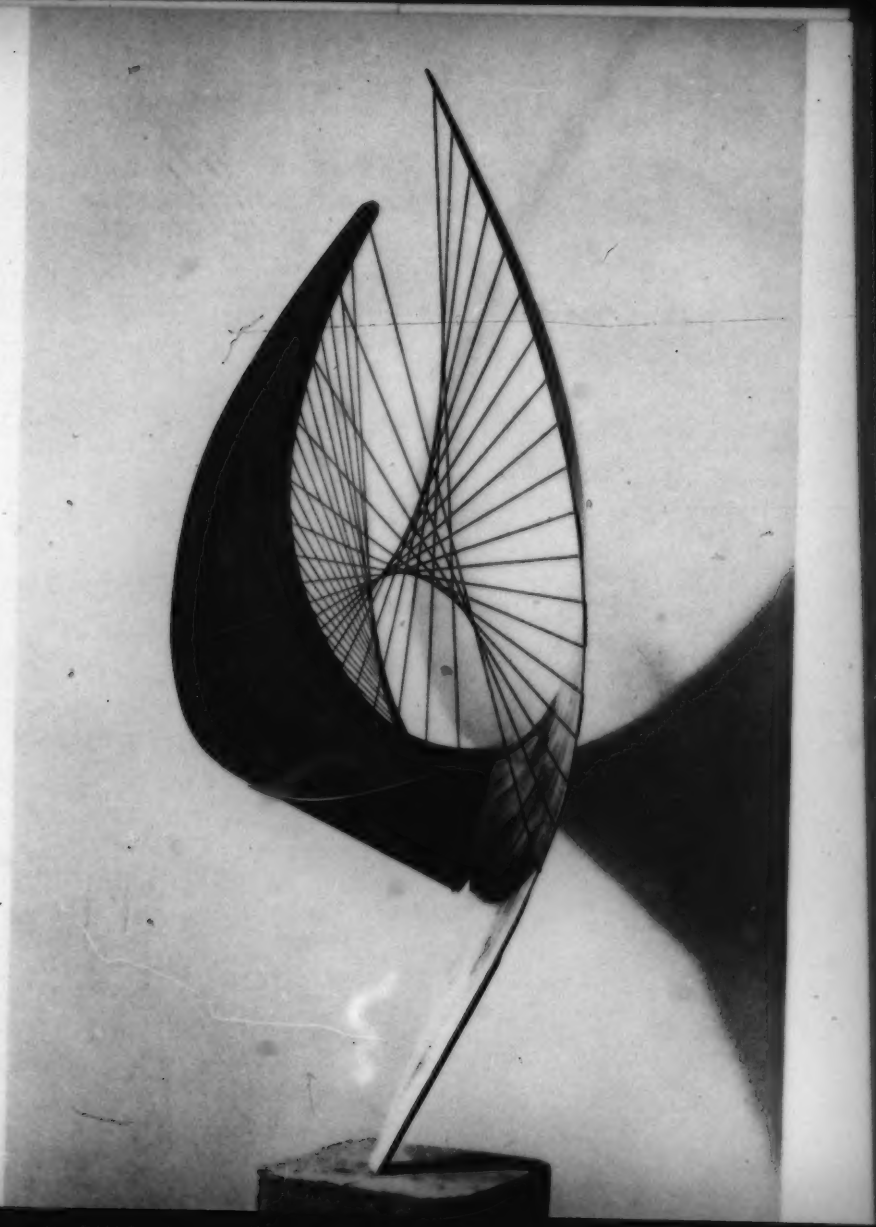

CATALOGUE

1	Two forms with sphere White Alabaster 18 x 10"	1934
2	Discs in echelon Bronze, cast in 1959 9½ x 9¾	1935
3	Marble form White marble 11½"	1936
4	Two forms Teak wood 24"	1938
5	Oval sculpture Bronze, cast in 1959 16⅛"	1943
6	Tides Plane wood with colour 18⅓"	1946
7	Pendour Plane wood with colour 28"	1947
8	Eidos Portland stone with colour 20"	1947
9	Dyad Rosewood 46½"	1949

10	Single form (Antiphon) Boxwood 81"	1953
11	Curved form Serravezza marble 20"	1954
12	Hollow form (Penwith) Lagoswood 23 x 36"	1955
13	Vertical form Wood 35"	1955/56
14	Forms in movement (Galliard) Copper 30"	1956
15	Curved form (Trevalgan) Bronze 36" Collection Mr. Peter Josten	1956
16	Involute II Bronze 18"	1956
17	Maquette for Orpheus Brass with strings 24"	1956
18	Stringed figure (Curlew) Brass 22" long Collection Dr. and Mrs. Wasserman	1956
19	Maquette for Winged figure Brass 22"	1957
20	Winged figure II Brass with strings 61"	1957
21	Reclining figure Bronze (unique copy) 18 x 50"	1957

22	Reclining figure (Trenona) Bronze 12"	1958
23	Torso II (Torcello) Bronze 34½"	1958
24	Figure (Oread) Bronze 20"	1958
25	Cantate Domino Bronze 80"	1958
26	Sea form (Porthmeor) Bronze 46" long	1958
27	Head (Icon) Marble 31½"	1959
28	Carving Alabaster 12"	1959
29	Carving Serravezza marble 10"	1959
30	Carving Alabaster 13"	1959

Drawings

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Born 1903, Wakefield, Yorkshire, England.
Studied at Royal College of Art, London; then in Florence and Rome.
Lived and worked in London until 1939; since 1939 has lived in St. Ives, Cornwall, where her studio and workshop are now situated.
Was created COMMANDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE, 1958

EXHIBITIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1928	First exhibition in London
1931	Member of "7 and 5" Group, London
1933	Member of "Abstraction-Creation", Paris Member of "Unit One", London
1933—1954	Exhibited at Lefevre Gallery, London
1949	Exhibited at Durlarcher Bros., New York
1950	Retrospective Exhibition of Sculpture and Drawings at the 25th Biennale, Venice
1951	Executed two large sculptures for "Festival of Britain"
1953	Her sculpture figured in the colour film "Figure in a Landscape", produced by Dudley Shaw Was awarded a second prize in "The Unknown Political Prisoner", International Competition in London
1954	Retrospective Exhibition of Work from 1927—1954 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London Executed sets and costumes for the Michael Tipett opera "The Midsummer Marriage", at Covent Garden, London Exhibited at Martha Jackson Gallery, New York
1955—1957	Retrospective Exhibition touring Art Museums in the U.S.A.
1956	Exhibited at Gimpel Fils, London Exhibited at Martha Jackson Gallery, New York
1958	Participated in exhibition "50 Years of Modern Art", Brussels Exhibited at Gimpel Fils, London
1959	Exhibited at Middelheim Park, Antwerp. Exhibited at DOCUMENTA II, Kassel, Germany
	Retrospective Exhibition at the FIFTH BIENNALE, Sao Paulo

Work in Public Collections

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Detroit Art Museum, Detroit
Walker Art Center, Minnapolis
Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo

Rijks Museum — Kroller Muller Museum, Holland

National Galleries of Australia and Canada
Tate Gallery, London
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Arts Council of Great Britain
The British Council, etc.

Important Commission

1951	"Turning Forms" — Festival of Britain "Contrapuntal Forms" — Arts Council of Great Britain "Vertical Forms" — Technical College, Hatfield
1954	"Monolyth" (Empyrean) was placed outside the Royal Festival Hall, London
1956	"Theme on Electronics", Mullard House, London
1958—1959	"Meridian" Bronze Sculpture, fifteen feet high for State House, London

Monographs

1944	"Barbara Hepworth". Foreword by William Gibson ('Ariel' Series, Faber & Faber, London, 1944).
1952	"Barbara Hepworth, Carvings and Drawings." Foreword by Sir Herbert Read and notes by the artist. (Lund Humphries Ltd., London, 1952.)
1958	"Barbara Hepworth, Europäische Bildhauer." Foreword by Professor A. M. Hammacher. (P. Allert de Lange, Amsterdam, 1958.)